

Parents & 'Education.'

18 Nov 23

It is curious to consider the attitude taken up by parents in general on the subject of education. In the last-quarter of a century or more, 'Education' has, in one form or other, been pretty constantly & fully prominently before us. The air has been full of compressed noise of many words, but the dir has been, for the most part, in the several camps of the schoolmasters & their allies. The parents standing round to see fair play. Now, when the conflict of opinion issues in something definite, the 'Modern Side', the High School for Girls, the Kinder Garten, the Universities' Local Examinations, parents come in to give the new thing ~~their~~ very hearty & ungrudging support, provided that it commend itself to their common sense. But they don't make the first move. They have a right to expect that fitting education shall, somehow, be provided for their children, & they are willing to pay for it. For this way of looking at the matter implies two dangerous notions: first, that 'Education' belongs to the school, is to the professional teachers, & has little to do with the bringing up children yet-at-home; next, that, while it may be necessary to study the laws of mind & of body to get-at-right principles of education for the school, home bringing up is another matter, & wants no more than the light of a little common sense, & is successful according as parents have more or less of the latter quality. A great deal is being said just now about technical education. The reform demanded is, that the children in elementary schools should

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A part - deal - being said just now about technical education. Shall or shall not the children in elementary schools get such training of hands as shall put them readily in learning a handicraft - is the immediate question before the country. I am in little doubt as to the answer. In this movement - in favor of expending ~~education~~ ^{on the work} but not ~~on the work~~ ^{on the work} of electrical education is an expression of a strong sentiment which is bringing about a revolution in the working world. Now this question, so understood, marks a certain educational advance; the recognition of a principle which underlies the possibility of all education - that the human frame, brain as well as muscles - grows to the uses it is earliest - put to. Mrs. Meredith: Here is a link for thinking people. The industry of the pick is hardly to be protested, but - what if the best of the tools could be put so well that the fingers shape themselves involuntarily to the work. You see it in the fingers of a pianist - centering over imaginary keys. Now is it a case of muscle versus mind. Delightful possibilities open of wage-earning work done by the older boys & girls, who under such changed conditions are allowed to stay at school until their ~~particular~~ ^{particular} is 14 or 15 - instead of being removed at 10 or 11 years - for 2 or 3 additional years' schooling at an age when can appreciate it - it did be of most use to them.

should have their muscle trained to the use of
tools - not that they should be turned out complete
as a piece of handicraft. But this demand, as
understood, marks an educational advance, a
recognition of the principle which underlies
the possibility of all education - that the human
frame - brain as well as muscle - grows to
the uses it - is earliest put to. It is hardly
possible to get beyond the ground covered by this
simple sounding axiom; in other words,
it is hardly possible to overstate the possibilities
of education. Anything may be made of a child
by those who first get him into their hands. A
fond natured parent does not hold this view with
unmixed joy. The responsibility of parents to which
human nature is averse is being shifted from
the shoulders of the schoolmaster to his own. He
is inclined to take an optimistic view of things.
'I don't see,' he says, 'but that - you leave out
the criminal classes & that sort of thing, the
world goes on very well. Our children are
fond & pleasant; our friends are good & pleasant;
there are infinitely many good & pleasant &
able people in the world; what more would you
have?' And you think of the pleasant-people
you know, & answer, 'What more indeed!' Perhaps
it is an impertinence to think of mending
a system which has produced so much that
is good. But then you look at home -
to find yourself compassed about with infirmities;
you look abroad, in almost every family there
is a spoilt life, you hardly know a person
without

some defect of heart or intellect or temper which
makes him a little burdensome to himself &
a little trying to his friends. It is because of
the infirmities & not the sins of them that it is
difficult to love at first; & it is, commonly, my
own infirmities, and ^{not} my sins, that are stumbling
blocks ~~in my path~~. Now, in the light of modern
science it is not so much to say that every infirmity
of the flesh & spirit is, more or less, the result
of defective education. So Adam's sullen,
^{reluctant} indolent, like his father or mother
before him? That is the fault of his education:
she was born with a tendency to sullenness, ~~but~~
but a tendency only becomes a temper as the
result of an indulged habit. That such a habit
should have been allowed to grow in the child is
an instance of defective education. Has a
man a large brain & a narrow chest? It
has recently been held on good authority that the
width of the chest of the new-born infant varies
only with the size of the child; in other words, that is,
~~children are not~~ ^{children are not} born with a narrow chest. Therefore,
the narrow chest, with attendant low vitality, is
a consequence of defective education. It is
needless to go on setting aside cases of congenital
disease - even here education may do in-
finitely much - it rests with parents in free means
to work out the salvation of their children, though
with great straining, for there are mysteries of
sin & temptation beyond the scope of education.
There is no room to doubt that his education, such as
it was, has been the making of every man, such
as he is, that, not so much his school education
as the bringing-up he got at home. And it is ^{not}

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Sense, & that peculiar natural aptitude bestowed by the
Creator which few will venture to deny to the parent. Like
other divine callings, that of the parent requires the preparation
of careful study: the problem of education is not to be solved
by rule of thumb. To quote Dr. Spencer again, "Some
acquaintance with the principles of physiology & the
elementary truths of psychology is indispensable for the
right bringing-up of children." "Indispensable" - yes,
the parent who has not laid himself out diligently to
gain some acquaintance with the principles of these two
sciences cannot conceivably turn out his children at their
very best: at the most, he can but guide himself by
hearsay & follow a course ~~because~~ ^{by} ~~advice~~
~~if his treatment of his children is empirical uncertainty~~
But let parents get an insight into the principles of
education as based upon natural law, & they go to
work with the courage, confidence & consistency which
carry success.
~~are more than half the battle.~~ What is more, "As labor
we delight in physics pain"; we delight in doing what
we know how to do: and the ^{task} ~~labors~~ of education, ~~another~~
of being a burden & a puzzle, becomes the engrossing
& delightful occupation of the parent's life.
But what, practically, is education, & on what conditions
does educability depend? These questions are important
as, in the first place, shaping the ~~views~~ ^{views} of the rational
parent; & in the next, as determining whether parents
themselves are open to education - that is, whether it
is ~~for~~ ^{for} ~~going~~ ^{going} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~bring~~ ^{bring} ~~before~~ ^{before} the ~~eyes~~ ^{eyes} ~~parent~~ ^{parent} the
principles ~~on which~~ ^{on which} he is morally bound
to bring up his child. We are all agreed that
education, even intellectual education, means something
more than the acquisition of knowledge; we know, too,
that there is an education of the feelings, of the will, of the
phys

physical powers - in fact, the idea of education creeps
about us & about us, vast & nebulous, hardly to be
tethered in by the mind, much less to be expressed in a
sentence or two. The notion is too big for us: it is im-
practicable; come just let it go, & fall back on the old
idea that education is synonymous with 'schooling'!

The aim of education is easier to define: it is the
turning out of a human being at his absolute best,
every tendency to evil repressed, every capacity for
good that is in him developed into a power. Right learning

whatever goes under the name of 'schooling' will not carry
us far here. But more than one educational reformer has
come forward with a beautifully produced method of education
providing for the orderly & progressive development of the
child's faculties; & that, always following the lead of
Nature & reverently observing her laws. But I must
not say a word here of the principles of Froebel, of the
practical we owe him for originating, & rather, for labouring
to perfect, a true conception of education.

But Education is Chameleon-like, & many descriptions
are true of it. Let me offer a definition which is very
far from being exhaustive, ~~and~~ ^{at yet} ~~it~~ ^{it} ~~deserves to be called~~ ^{practical working}. It will be
found to cover the whole ground. It is an aspect of the
subject which ~~seems to me important~~, ~~both because it~~
shows how indispensable to the parent - is some scientific
knowledge, & also because it opens up a field
of definite, practical work, with assured results. & that
is just as to be like the return of a pound for the
outlay of a penny.

Education

Pending the development of the will, which arrives at maturity, if ever, only with the maturity of the man, it appears to me that Habit is the instrument - put into the hands of the educator therewith to supplement the weak will of the child, & to enable him to make with ease & pleasure those good & necessary efforts to which human nature is prone. Do a thing a hundred times in succession, without lapses, it becomes as easy to do it as not; do it a thousand, or so, times & it becomes your nature, a habit which you must do violence to yourself to break through. Here it is not that life is made easy to all of us by persistent habits - the labor of decision on all trifling matters of daily living - of the bath, the toilet, the table, the common avocations - would wear us out. Now this enormous force of habit appears to me to bridge over the otherwise impassable gulf between the spontaneous development of human nature & the ordered action of the self-disciplined human being. It is possible to form in the child the habit of doing or saying, even of thinking & feeling, that which he should do or say. Think or feel. It is possible (with certain limitations) to form in him the habits of vigorous health, of a good life, of alert intelligence, & thereby, to ease his way, & spare him much of struggle & disappointment; of the childish despair & early disgust which comes many a child to find up early the effort to do what he is 'supposed' as a thing beyond his power. If this be so, you will be willing to ~~go far~~ in ~~assigning to the formation of habits a first place in education~~, & ~~consequently~~ that let's care for child's habits, & the rest will take care of itself; & in this light, it is hardly too much to say, that

Ed.